

St Joseph's Orphanage, Kincumber

1887 – 1979

Other Names:

- Kincumber Boys' Home
- Kincumber Orphanage
- Kincumber Home School
- St Joseph's Orphanage and Institution for Homeless and Destitute Boys

Details

St Joseph's Orphanage, Kincumber, on the Central Coast, opened in 1887 and was run by the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart. It first housed boys aged 7 to 15, but by the 1970s accommodated boys and girls. More than 2,500 children passed through St Joseph's Orphanage by the time it closed in 1979.

Kincumber Boys' Home was established when Cardinal Patrick Moran donated a former presbytery and its grounds at Kincumber to the Sisters of St Joseph. The first group of 22 boys were from The Providence, in The Rocks. From 1892 to 1900, 236 boys were taken into the orphanage, and while 87 remained, 23 left for apprenticeships, 15 were 'adopted' (informally), 13 found employment, 97 were taken by friends of their family and one died. Sister Kathleen Burford writes that Sister Mary MacKillop travelled to sit with the dying boy.

The boys were schooled and taught the basic skills considered necessary for working class boys living a country life: farming, gardening, baking, dairying, cooking and tailoring. Boys also worked on improving the site, which expanded both its size and facilities from the 1890s to the early 20th century. Boys also gained the opportunity to work the ferry service, which was started in 1905 and ran until 1960, and learn navigational and other maritime skills. More enjoyable activities included 'The Wonder Band', which was established in 1922.

New policies adopted by the Catholic Welfare Bureau led to changes in Catholic institutions in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1964 the former ferrymen's cottages were converted to accommodation for boys and the dormitories were converted to units. Girls were admitted from 1966. Kincumber was closed in 1974 and the last boys left in 1977.

In 2012 William George Fossey, who lived at St Joseph's Orphanage in the late 1940s, wrote to Find and Connect to share his memories:

The orphanage ran a ferry service on the Brisbane Waters, from Kincumber to Davistown and Woy Woy. There was a weekly service to Gosford. The name[s] of the ferries were Stella Maris, Killarney and Southern Cross.

The orphanage also had a Brass Band with instruction and conducting by a Mr Clifford Goodchild, and on occasions would give recitals in Woy Woy and Gosford. Mr Goodchild played the Tuba for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and The ABC Band of the Air. For myself, I served as an Altar Boy, and was a member of the Band.

I do remember that it was fairly Spartan living conditions as the dormitory only had three walls and I slept in the front row closest to the open air veranda, and we all lived on the first floor upper level with the refectory on the floor below.

Being in the musical brass band had its privileges, since we had an after evening meal supper of a slice of cake and warm cup of a cocoa at about 9:30pm. This would occur two or three times a week depending on Mr Goodchild's availability, as he was a member of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

I remember that the school [that was] attached to the orphanage and run by the Nuns only went to sixth grade. I can only remember the names of two of the Nuns; Sister Iranaus and Sr. Hilda. Also one the families involved with running the ferries lived just outside the orphanage on the other side of the road and if my memory serves me correct the surname was Stanley.

Fr. Patrick Croke trained me as an Altar Boy and I served an old Dean whose name I just cannot remember, but I do remember we responded in Latin within the liturgy. This served me well as I passed the primary finals with honours, which had help me greatly in my academic years that followed. I was a resident at this orphanage from 1946 to 1950 if my memory is correct.

Gallery



Kincumber orphanage c1913

Description: This image is hosted on the Gosford Library's Flickr page - Gostalgia: local history from Gosford Library's photos.



The presbytery at Kincumber where the sisters and 22 boys from the Providence, Dawes Point, took up residence in 1887

Description: This is a copy of an image reproduced in K.E. Burford's *Unfurrowed Fields*.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart \(1866 - current\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [St Joseph's Providence \(1880 - 1901\)](#)
In 1887, 22 boys from The Providence were transferred to Kincumber.
- [St Joseph's Home for Children, Croydon \(1925 - 1981\)](#)
Older boys were transferred from St Joseph's Home Croydon to St Joseph's Kincumber

Resources

- Van Anholt, Jacqueline, [Former boys' home inmate says ... I was sent to hell](#), The Northern Daily Leader, 7 June 2009
- Parks, Andy, [Forgotten no longer](#), Northern Rivers Echo, 10 May 2012

- [*The Cry of the Children: Mr P McGarry Introduces a Deputation: The Chief Secretary's Sympathetic Words*](#), Freeman's Journal, 25 November 1915
- [*A tidal ferry nearing journey's end*](#), Australian Women's Weekly, 26 May 1971
- Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission and the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes, *A piece of the story : national directory of records of Catholic organisations caring for children separated from families*, November 1999

Records

For more information and to access your records, follow the links below:

Records

- [Register of Children, St Joseph's Orphanage, Kincumber \(1887 - 1976\)](#)
 - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
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